Volume 19 No. 4 August 2008

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Gagged by the City Council

WHO NEEDS TO HEAR FROM THE PUBLIC WHEN YOU ALREADY HAVE A "MANDATE"?

by Janet Blanding

If you want to tell the Olympia City Council about how Mt. Rainier is about to erupt and we had all better put on our lava-proof hats, you will be given three minutes at the beginning of the meeting. If you want to plug your upcoming pie-eating contest or say you like the new trees on Legion Way, they're happy to hear about it. But if you want to address important community issues being decided by the city council, you may find yourself gagged.

The proposed amendment to the city's comprehensive plan—which would change the height limits on the isthmus between Capitol Lake and Budd Inlet—has generated a tremendous amount of public controversy. But the Olympia City Council will no longer allow comments about the rezone during the Public Communications portion of council meetings.

On July 15, Friends of the Waterfront activist Thad Curtz went to the Council meeting to speak about objections he had to the proposed rezone during the portion of the meeting normally earmarked for comments from the public. Before going to the meeting, Curtz asked a city planner about the rules. He was told that testimony about the rezone would be allowed, and the planner read him from the rules about public communication from the previous meeting's agenda.

But Curtz was given incorrect information. In a change from the wording on previous agendas, the Public Communications section of the agenda for July 15, 2008 read "During this portion of the meeting, citizens may address the Council regarding any item related to City business, including items on the Agenda, except on agenda items for which the City Council either held a Public Hearing in the last 90 days, or will hold a Public Hearing within 90 days." (A public hearing before the City Council regarding the rezone is scheduled for September 16.)

Curtz chose to use his three minutes of public communication to comment on this newly disclosed policy. "The new rule means there is no space for testimony between the planning recommendation and the council hearing," said Curtz. "It means that if you have one hearing about an important matter like this, there is half a year in which you [the city council] are unwilling to take public comments." He described some of the difficulties citizens experienced in trying to speak against the rezone at the planning commission hearing, where the meeting room reached capacity 40 minutes before the hearing began, leaving many people unable to speak, or even listen to the hearing. Further limiting comment at council meetings after so many would-be speakers were disappointed at the hearing is an odd response. "This seems like precisely the wrong direction to go," said Curtz. "You seem to have decided to close yourself off from dealing with the public."

> TJ Johnson: "This is a council that does not want to hear from the public as much as previous councils."

Curtz wasn't the only one caught off guard by this change of council protocol; councilmember Karen Messmer remarked that she was surprised by the language change on the city council agenda restricting public communication. "Because [the agenda] is a public document and it has now become an official protocol, I would have appreciated some notification," Messmer said. Referring to the isthmus rezone, she went on to say, "This issue is controversial, and people are going to want to speak. 180 days is a long time. I am not comfortable with that 180 days window now that it is represented in text as a firm policy of ours." Mayor Doug Mah, however, was unfazed by this change; he remarked that it was "my responsibility for inserting the language. I asked the staff to make that change to reflect what I believe is current council practice."

After some further discussion by the Council, Curtz was allowed to speak, mostly at the behest of Rhenda Strub, who felt it would be unfair to deny him the opportunity to testify, given that staff had not advised him that testimony on the issue would be restricted.

Who changed the rule, and when?

Has this pre-hearing communication restriction truly been council practice? Former councilmember TJ Johnson explained that during his tenure on the council, the policy had been changed so that comments would be closed when there had been a hearing within the previous 90 days. "The record had to close. But you can't close the public record before you've had a public hearing. And that's what they're trying to do." He thinks this new policy is an effort to reduce public input. "This is a council that does not want to hear from the public as much as previous councils," said Johnson. "That is pretty clear from the way they are doing things."

Former councilmember Matthew Green recalls the protocol similarly. "The policy that the council set when I was on the council was to close the issue if we had a hearing within the past 90 days. We wanted to hear all of the comments by the public hearing, and then basically close the issue. We never meant to restrict discussion only to the public hearing." Green thinks this change in protocol is about more than keeping the record straight. "The new council is imposing a gag rule," says Green. "They don't want to listen. "

The Olympia City Council Protocols are posted online. The current protocol does indeed state that public communication excludes "items that have been the subject of a public hearing within the previous 90 days and items for which the City Council has scheduled a public hearing to be held within 90 days." However, at the end of the protocol document is a statement that reads "Last updated: 7/18/2008." This update, then, was posted three days after the meeting where this issue arose. The previous council protocol, posted on 2/12/08 (during the tenure of the current city council) does not mention anything about restricting public communication 90 days in advance of a hearing; instead it simply excludes, "items that have been the subject of a public hearing within the previous 90 days and items that are appeals of a quasi-judicial matter."

Email queries to councilmembers yielded confusing results. Several councilmembers stated that they believed this had always been council practice. Cathie Butler, com-

▸ **CITY COUNCIL** continues on page 4

Nah, they don't wanna offer input. They're just probably here for the fish art! Concerned community members lining up outside the hearing room at the Olympia Center for the Planning Commission Hearing. Photo by Bert Whitlock.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

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Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress*, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *olywip@gmail.com* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

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Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

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On the cover: Army Stryker vehicles unloaded from the USNS Brittin at the Port of Tacoma. Photo by Bert Whitlock. See page 7.

Also, Bernie Meyer, the American Gandhi. See page 8.

Back cover: Collateral Damage game at Lakefair. Photo by Necashaw Montgomery. See page 3.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Freeschool Community is now accepting classes for the Fall 2008 Quarter!

Anyone can facilitate a class as long as it is free of charge. Some class subjects we are looking for are: Art, Language, Dance, Yoga, Activism, Cooking and just about any subject that you desire. Our class catalog is quarterly. The class submission deadline for the Fall quarter (October, November and December) is September 1st. A class submission form is available on our website. Information should include: Name, contact, title of class, location of class (it can be located anywhere in Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater or surrounding Thurston County area), dates and times, and a short description (2-4 sentences). A longer description can be posted on our website. All submissions should be e-mailed to the email address found by visiting www.Freeschoolunity.org or www.www.FreeschoolCommunity.org and clicking on "Facilitate a Class." You can also mail the above information to the mailing address found on our website.

POWER wants to hear your story

POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated. We hold volunteer meetings every Wednesday afternoon at 1:30 in our office in the Payne Room of the First Christian Church. This summer, The Poor People's Human Rights Campaign is organizing people all over the United States to share their stories of living in poverty. The goal of making these stories public is to let our government know that poverty is a human rights' violation and to demand for better policies.

If you have been unfairly treated by DSHS, unjustly evicted, forced to live on the streets, denied healthcare, unable to feed yourself or your children, or denied an education—then your rights have been violated. Contact POWER and share your story with one of our advocates. We will be exposing these violations at the March For Our Lives in September at the Republican National Convention, held in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Attend our August 4th **POWER Outage** at First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE. We will meet at 5:30 for a potluck, from 6 to 8 we will have a discussion on human rights and poverty in America. Bring the kids, onsite childcare!

Sweat free!

Blauer Manufacturing, one of the companies that Olympia and State of Washington contract with have dropped their abusing subcontractor and as a result Blauer manufacturing is no longer included in the Subsidizing Sweatshop report. This demonstrates the effect that combined efforts for non-sweatshop clothes can have. According to Sweat-Free Communities the Subsidizing Sweatshop report initially associated the Blauer Manufacturing Company with the Hui Yang Charming Garments factory. Import records from October 2007 show that Blauer received three shipments of jackets from this factory at that time. In addition, Blauer's own disclosure to the City of Milwaukee from December of 2003 names Charming Garments as a factory supplier of apparel. It appears likely that Blauer has received products from Charming Garments for several years. However, on July 1, 2008, Blauer told us that they have ceased placing orders with Charming Garments because "Blauer representatives were denied access to inspect its manufacturing locations." If company representatives were denied access to inspect working conditions, and Blauer had no means of exercising its influence to improve working conditions, SweatFree Communities supports Blauer's decision to cease doing business with the factory. Therefore, we have now removed Blauer from this report.

Fundraiser pizza party with live music!

Thursday, August 7th, 2008, 6:30pm
Fertile Ground, 311 9th Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Pizza Party With Live Music to raise funds for the Radical Road Trip project. This project will create a video documentary of several activists travelling to the Republican National Convention protests in Minneapolis. The final documentary will screen in Olympia in November. For more information in getting involved with the fundraiser or the Radical Road Trip contact us by visiting www.Freeschoolunity.org or www.www.FreeschoolCommunity.org and clicking on "Calendar of Classes and Events."

Suggested Donation of $3.00-$10.00. No one turned away for lack of funds.

Unity rally to demilitarize our ports and communities

Saturday, August 9
4 pm: Tacoma rally, exact locations TBA
5 pm: Coffee Klatch to follow

The Port of Tacoma is being used as a revolving door to send equipment to continue the illegal occupation of Iraq.

Come together to say **"No to Unending Occupation and War!"**

This rally is an effort to build coalitions between exist organizations supporting GI Resistance, Anti-Recruitment, Port Demilitarization and War Resistance. Your involvement is important!

Gather together afterwards for a Coffee Klatch with other regional community members.

We welcome your help in planning this event!

Unity Rally Planning Meeting
Sunday, August 9, 5 pm

Please contact 360-915-6685, *pinfeathers@gmail.com* for more info. Visit *www.olypmr.org* for updates.

See related story on page 7.

Freeschool meeting and potluck

The Olympia Freeschool will be having a potluck and meeting to discuss the future of the Freeschool, including the possibility of moving to a new space. All community members and volunteers of past and present are encouraged to attend. The meeting will take place on Sunday, August 17, 3–5:30 p.m. at Tradition's Cafe, 300 5th Ave. SW.

POWER soul food secret café

Friday, August 22, beginning at 6 pm, at Monica, Vince and Bryn's house, go east toward Lacey, turn left on Phoenix, turn right on State Avenue (between Martin Way and South Bay) park in the big parking lot on your right and walk across the street to the last house on the left, yellow with red trim.

Enjoy delicious home-cookin' and music by local bands, Cat Bower, William Carpenter, The Winning Lasses, Jenny Jenkins, and Greta Jane! The menu includes fried chicken, okra, gumbo, corn bread, mac n cheese, red beans and rice, collard greens, peach cobbler, banana pudding and yummy drinks.

Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice presents

Peace Works Conference 2008

"Dual Occupations: Sovereignty and Freedom from Iraq to Palestine"
Oct. 17 -19, The Evergreen State College, Olympia

Mark your calendars for this conference designed to connect communities working to end occupation and war in the Middle East with workshops, panels and trainings led by **Dahlia Wasfi, MD, Col. Ann Wright**, **Phyllis Bennis**, and **Adam Shapiro**.

The 2008 Conference aims to assist our movement in sharing skills and fresh ideas to become a more effective in our organizing. We will educate each other and challenge oppression through political, media, and gender analysis, with new knowledge of our role in the dynamics of the Middle East and US foreign policy. Through bridging communities and acknowledging differences we will find new strategies to build a broader and more effective movement.

Sign up for conference updates:
peaceworks@rachelcorriefoundation.org
Help plan and volunteer:
becca@rachelcorriefoundation.org

Co-sponsor the 2008 Conference:
In 2006 the Peace Works Conference had over 50 co-sponsoring organizations and individuals. To find out the benefits of co-sponsorship contact *annamarie@rachelcorriefoundation.org*

For more info, visit *www.rachelcorriefoundation.org/peaceworks*, call 360.754.3998, email peaceworks@rachelcorriefoundation.org

Peace activists stage war games at Lakefair

by Necashaw R. Montgomery

Amid the crowded streets of Lakefair last week, military recruitment officers wandered the grounds in search of potential enlistees while counter-recruitment volunteers set up a booth next to Traditions loaded with facts about the war, alternative solutions to enlistment, and a carnival style war game, called "Collateral Damage."

The military's recruitment tactics are well maintained and thrive on a culture of oblivious civilians; recruiters target impoverished areas, giving promises of college education and financial support; they assist in the development of video games. They sit in career centers at schools, waiting for strays to wander in, and thanks to Sec.9528 of The No Child Left Behind Act, they are permitted to request students' personal information from any school that receives federal funding. However, the most elusive tactic succeeds by eluding reality and glorifying war with entertainment.

Unsuspecting youth are at the mercy of media and films that mythologize war and depict military life as awash with triumphs over simplistic bad guys. For children, video games teach them to not only tolerate war but also to value and respect its existence. Couple this acceptance with a parade of patriotism and honor, and these children, interested in entertainment, become tomorrow's casualties on the battlefield. If people are aware of the facts about recruitment tactics and war, they'll be more conscious of what they accept. Chance Kroll, Kim Chaplin, Jean Eberhardt and many other community members designed Collateral Damage with this exact concern in mind.

In the game, the player is given eight regular nerf balls, to represent each year of a recruit's mandatory enlistment in the military, and then each ball is thrown like a grenade at a 7×4 ft image of a city filled with schools, hospitals, religious centers, and other buildings. If a structure is hit, the player is given a fact, denoting lives taken and the effect it has had on the community. At the end, the player is given a total death count for their eight years in the service.

The effect this game had on most players was obvious to those working the booth. It effectively narrowed the perspective on military actions and brought to light the true burden of being a soldier at the mercy of war. Chance explains, "Kids went in there expecting it to be a game where they blow up stuff and get points. Then they would throw the ball, and I would be like, oh you just blew up a hospital, or you just blew up a church, a worship center for the community, and now that is gone. And there was a wedding going on, so you just destroyed three generations of family that were joining together, and they're gone; they're dead. The kids [approximately aged 10–12] would laugh a little at first, and then they were conflicted…they weren't used to being asked to actually think about the consequences of a war. They were used to seeing things explode and [then] cheering."

The game was developed as a positive response to the military vessel *Old Man IV* that docked at Percival Landing for the week of Lakefair. The fifty-one year old barge travels frequently as a representation of naval success and longevity. It is also a prime opportunity to inspire young minds to join the military. Community members could not prevent the vessel from docking during Lakefair, so they focused their energy on creating awareness about the alternatives to joining the military. Collateral Damage did exactly that. It showed that if people can readjust their understanding of the military and war, alternatives will become salient.

In closing, volunteer Cristen Love shared a story of a high school boy that planned to enlist after graduation. The boy lined up to play the game and was given the instructions and eight balls, yet before he threw the first ball he hesitated and gave the balls back to her. After some discussion, he revealed that he didn't want to take any lives and he left the booth with books on alternatives to enlistment. Young people like this high school boy are exactly who counter recruiters are trying to reach.

If you are interested in supporting counter-recruitment or would like to know more about alternatives to enlistment, and visit any one of these websites:

It's My Life: A guide to alternatives after high school
www.afsc.org/itsmylife

Iraq Veterans Against the War
ivaw.org

Army of None
www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook

Courage to Resist
www.couragetoresist.org

For more than 10 years, the U.S.A. has deliberately pursued a policy of destroying Iraq's Water Treatment System. As a Result, the U.N. estimates more than 500,000 children have Died of Diarrhea, Typhoid, hepatitis, and Chlorea
Free ice water.

Photos by Necashaw Montgomery.

Top: Do you know enough to enlist? A young girl waits as her father targets a dwelling in Collateral Damage.

Right: This sign sat above a large cooler of water, haunting thirst quenchers.

Below: Take aim at Collateral Damage's city scape drawn only in Sharpie marker by Chance Kroll. Manual construction by Jean Eberhardt, Kim Chaplin, Chance Kroll and many other volunteers.

▸ **CITY COUNCIL** continued from page 1

munications manager for the city, stated that this policy had been changed at the City Council retreat in January 2008, and she had overlooked updating the website until after the confusion arose at the July 15 meeting. No councilmember, however, was willing to make a firm statement that the policy was explicitly changed at the retreat; most evaded the question, or responded vaguely. "The protocol was not changed," wrote Craig Ottavelli in an email, "rather a needed clarification in the language was addressed." Former councilmembers Matthew Green and TJ Johnson state that this was not the case. "The bottom line," says Green," is that this was not the protocol before 2008."

Is conversation still allowed?

Although zoning issues are generally not considered quasi-judicial ,concerns have been raised about ex-parte communications with interested members of the community regarding the isthmus rezone. Most councilmembers affirm that they are willing to meet with constituents on any matter, but some are beginning to exhibit reluctance to have one-on-one conversations with their constituents about this matter. At the July 15 City Council meeting, Rhenda Strub stated that "I am not by any means avoiding anyone who wants to speak about this," but mentioned that the city attorney, Tom Morrill, advised the council to "be careful, lest you set yourself up for appeal." In an email communication to me, Joan Machlis wrote "Although the legal issues on this one are less clear than on a single site rezone proposal, I am choosing now to not meet with individuals to discuss this issue. The reason is that I do not want to jeopardize my ability to participate in the process." An email requesting clarification from Morrill as to whether the rezone issue was quasi-judicial was not answered.

Former councilmember TJ Johnson was puzzled by these concerns on the part of current councilmembers, first, because he did not believe the rezone fit the criteria for a quasi-judicial matter; zoning matters are not considered quasi-judicial unless an action is appealed. Even if it were, he explained, "that doesn't prevent the council from talking to people about it. All it requires is that if there is an appeal that comes to them, they have to disclose they have had an ex parte conversation. It is just a matter of disclosure, that they've had the communication at that point, not that they can't have that communication."

Put it in an email

The council's new mantra seems to be "put it in an email." But not everyone has access to a computer, and many people with economic or educational disadvantages may find writing a letter difficult. Even for people without such barriers, writing or emailing the city council hasn't always proven to be a very satisfactory method of communication. In my own experience of trying to get information about the council protocol change, I found councilmembers Karen Messmer and Joan Machlis to be promptly responsive. However, when I wrote to question the protocol change and expressed my concerns about the way the Planning Commission hearing was run, other councilmembers replied in a distinctly bristly manner. Rhenda Strub replied that "I disagree that there is any appearance 'that both the Planning Commission and the City Council have very little regard for the feelings of the public regarding this matter.' Furthermore, while I care very much what my constituents *think* about this issue, I find myself increasingly weary of hearing arguments about how they *feel*." Apparently, although Strub has regard for the feelings of the public, it's a weary regard.

> It is interesting to note that among the approxim ately 27% of the comments that are pro-rezone, many were written by people who have a stake in changing the zoning.

Some councilmembers, including Mayor Mah, declined to respond at all. Other Olympia citizens have noted that Mah is unresponsive to email communications. Rob Richards, a local activist who has been involved with a variety of local issues, including Olympia's Tent City, the Poor People's Union, public campaign financing, and homeless advocacy, reports that it is difficult to engage Mayor Mah via email. Despite writing numerous emails about city business, Richards has only received one response from the mayor. Email queries to Mah regarding the plans for the September 16 hearing also went unanswered.

Some email responses are worse than silence. When real estate agent Rhonda Olnick wrote to Jeff Kingsbury about her objections to the rezone, citing factual information about condominium sales in the Olympia area which argued against the likelihood of ready sales of million dollar units, Kingsbury responded by questioning Olnick's credentials. "I was surprised that he didn't thank me for the factual information I provided the City Council," said Olnick. "Instead, he attacked my character, and made it appear that since I wasn't a realtor, I wasn't qualified to be stating those facts." Other email correspondents have been put off by Kingsbury's tendency to make certain statements using all capital letters, a practice which is considered "shouting" in an email.

Do "naysayers" really show up more?

An initial tabulation of the written comments to the Planning Commission shows that 552 separate communications were received regarding the isthmus rezone, with 151 supporting the rezone, and 401 opposing it. These communications have been posted on the Friends of the Waterfront website where the public can read them. It is interesting to note that among the approximately 27% of the comments that are pro-rezone, many were written by people who have a stake in changing the zoning: people who have an obvious connection to Triway Enterprises (the developer who proposed the rezone amendment), people in the construction or real estate business, or downtown business or property owners who believe the completion of the Larida Passage project will benefit them financially

At the Planning Commission meeting on July 21, Commissioner Cary Retlin dismissed the fact that the majority of the communications opposed the rezone, saying, "Naysayers show up more," adopting the moniker for opponents to the isthmus rezone popularized by *The Olympian*. But many people disagree, believing that people who stand to profit from the rezone show up, too. When former councilmember and Triway project manager Jeannette Hawkins sent out an email to 281 members of the local business community, urging them to write to the Commission about the project, many of them did. As Thad Curtz remarked, "It isn't just that people might like to get business from Triway, which has forty projects in the works, including 7,000 houses and 3 million square feet of commercial and public space around Cabela's. People in the business of developing property have a vested interest in making an extra effort to support rezoning in general, for anybody who wants to build a project."

> Will opponents to the rezone truly have a chance to speak their piece at the hearing on September 16?

At the Commission meeting, Commissioner Matthew Litwin argued very aggressively in favor of the rezone, and was perceived by many people in the audience to be attempting to dominate the discussion. Until recently, Litwin served on the editorial board of *The Olympian* as a community representative. When an editorial was published strongly urging the Planning Commission to recommend raising height limits on the isthmus ("End the blight, raise the height"), he recused himself from the editorial board's discussion and drafting of the editorial, because of his role as a planning commissioner. However, there was no indication that Litwin refrained from participation in *The Olympian*'s glowing editorial introducing Oly2012. Peter Stroble, who serves on the steering committee of Oly2012, has known Litwin since at least 1996 when, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*'s archives, they rowed together on the Yale Varsity Men's Crew team. At the time the editorial was published on April 6, Oly2012 had not yet publicly stated a position on the isthmus rezone. However, in May, the group recommended changing the height limits on the isthmus to allow Triway's Larida Passage project.

> Litwin got his way. The process wasn't mere "masturbation" [as he had warned]: Olympia really got screwed. The Planning Commission voted 7–3 to recommend raising building heights on the isthmus, despite the overwhelming preponderance of public communication objecting to the rezone.

During commission deliberations on July 21, Litwin echoed Retlin's sentiments about naysayers, and remarked that many of the communications from opponents of the rezone were "intellectually bankrupt." Observers of the meeting, many of whom who had communicated with the Commission on this matter, were nonplussed by this characterization. Perhaps in an effort to demonstrate how intellectual bankruptcy could be avoided, Litwin studded his comments with colorful metaphors; he used the phrase "where the rubber meets the road" three times in the first hour of the meeting. Later, he startled the audience by using the term "mental masturbation" to describe what the Commission's decision-making process might become if it wasn't accomplished in the way he envisioned.

Litwin got his way. The process wasn't mere "masturbation": Olympia really got screwed. The Planning Commission voted 7–3 to recommend raising building heights on the isthmus, despite the overwhelming preponderance of public communication objecting to the rezone. Commissioners Larry Leveen, Roger Horn, and James Reddick voted against changing the zoning. Commissioner Sarah Ryan, who was out of the country at the time of the meeting, wrote a statement opposing the rezone and stating that she would have voted against it.

Heard at the hearing?

Will opponents to the rezone truly have a chance to speak their piece at the hearing on September 16? The Planning Commission Hearing on June 24, held in the Olympia Center, left many Olympia citizens who wanted to voice their opinion about the rezone feeling frustrated and unheard. The hearing room has a maximum capacity of 277 people; more than 350 showed up for the hearing. Even people who arrived 40 minutes early were unable to enter the hearing room. Bridget Irish reported that, "I got there early, like a bunch of other people, and was disappointed that the space had filled so quickly." But, she added, she was "surprised and excited by the size of the turnout." Irish waited by the door for 15 or 20 minutes, hoping more people might be allowed to enter, but when it became evident that wasn't going to happen any time soon, she wrote a letter to the council expressing her opposition to the rezone, and left. Diana Arens had a similar experience. "Even though I arrived very early," Arens recounted, "I was disappointed when the room reached capacity

▸ **CITY COUNCIL** continued on next page

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▸ **CITY COUNCIL** continued from previous page

and I wasn't able to speak or even attend the hearing. " Downtown business owner Pit Kwiecinski also arrived well ahead of time, but was told the room was full and he could not enter. Kwiecinski went instead to the city council meeting—which was occurring at the same time—and before testifying against the proposed noise ordinance, told the council that there were a lot of disgruntled people stuck in the lobby of the Olympia Center.

An appearance of bias

People who were able to gain admittance to the hearing had complaints, as well. Although it appeared that the opponents of the rezone outnumbered the proponents significantly, there was no opportunity to gauge precisely how the community stacked up, for and against. In a letter to Planning Commission Chair Amy Tousley, Emily Ray of Friends of the Waterfront wrote, "Normally, one signs up to indicate interest in an issue, indicates pro or con, and THEN whether one intends to speak. You did not have a way to capture of the opinions of people who did not want to speak, nor did you ask for a hand vote to get a true sense of the division of opinion. This practice did a disservice to the many people who had a strong opinion but who did not wish to speak in that setting." Although 142 people signed in to speak against the proposed rezone amendment and 62 signed in to speak for it, speakers were taken alternately; to be truly representative of the will of the community, time should have been weighted proportionately. Furthermore, Tousley gaveled down crowd response far more frequently for the opponents of the rezone, although this may have been partially because there was more support in the room for speakers against the rezone, resulting in louder and longer applause. Chair Tousley also enforced time limits more strictly when speakers against the rezone exceeded their allotted three minutes than she did for rezone proponents. However, when Triway's presentation of their proposal exceeded its scheduled 15 minutes, and members of the audience began to call "Time!" as Tri Vo continued speaking, Tousley scolded audience members for their rudeness.

The structure of the hearing was also unfair for working people, since people needed to either line up hours in advance of the hearing to sign in, or send an underling to do so for them. People who can't leave work until 5 p.m. might find themselves shut out of the process. When asked about the procedure for signing in to testify at the hearing, Olympia Senior Planner Jan Weydemeyer told me that speakers were taken on a first come, first served basis. I asked if even people like Fred King, Chair of the Capitol Campus Design Advisory Committee, a retired architect who now resides in Tacoma, drove down to Olympia in the mid-afternoon to line up early. She replied that Fred King had arrived at 4:15 and was third in line when the sign-in process began. However, in an interview with King, (see page 6 of this issue), he stated that he had not stood in line at all, but sent a staffer from General Administration to sign him in. While King, speaking on behalf of the committee that advises the state's General Administration on campus design issues, presented informed and valuable testimony, there is an appearance of unfairness when the opportunity to speak at a public hearing is more readily available to people whose job standing allows either flexible work schedules or subordinates to stand in line for them.

> A number of groups have arisen to oppose the rezone and develop alternatives to huge luxury condos in this environmentally sensitive and culturally valuable area.

When the hearing ended at 10:15, many of the people who had wished to speak had no choice but to leave without doing so. This is unfortunate, as some of these silenced community members had valuable information to impart. For instance, a resident of the Cooper Crest subdivision developed by Triway Enterprises, had prepared testimony regarding the company's poor environment record. She, and others who left without having a chance to speak, were once again asked to submit comments in writing.

Concerns about the September 16 hearing

Now that the public's sole opportunity to speak about the rezone is the September 16 hearing before the City Council, the stakes are high. Clearly, the venue for the Planning Commission hearing was too small, and since a large crowd is anticipated for the upcoming council hearing, adequate accommodations with regard to both space and time should be provided. When several people heard a high-ranking city official remark that, "We're going to make it a small room because we don't want that kind of numbers showing up," concern was aroused, although witnesses were uncertain whether or not he was joking. Councilmember Jeff Kingsbury and city communications director Cathie Butler have since assured anxious community members that this will not be the case.

> "It's a temporal free speech zone," remarked Hellerman. "You can only comment in a timelined protest pen.

Using the council's preferred mode of communication, email, I asked councilmember Kingsbury about this rumor, writing "How is the council working to ensure that the September 16 hearing on the rezone will better accommodate those members of the public who wish to weigh in with their opinions? I heard a rumor that city staff is planning to hold the September 16 hearing in a *smaller* venue than the Olympia Center." Kingsbury assured me that "You have indeed heard 'rumors' regarding our council public hearing, WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTENDED TO BE IN A LARGE, ACCOMMODATING VENUE. At no time has there been any discussions that I am aware of to make it a small venue." Butler is keeping the community abreast of details regarding meeting location and time via the city's website News and FAQ page; she also posted a comment on Olyblog, a "hyperlocal" website, assuring the community that "the Sept 16 Public Hearing will be in a large facility - most likely the Washington Center."

"A timelined protest pen"

A number of groups have arisen to oppose the rezone and develop alternatives to huge luxury condos in this environmentally sensitive and culturally valuable area. One group, mostly comprised of twenty-somethings concerned about the effects of gentrification on downtown Olympia's unique cultural milieu, is now calling itself "People for a Participatory City" (PPC). One member of PPC, 19-year-old Jamie Hellerman, was dismayed to learn that she would be unable to share her thoughts on the rezone with the city council before the hearing on September 16, comparing the restriction on comment to the barricaded areas sometimes used to contain protesters at G8 summits and political conventions. "It's a temporal free speech zone," remarked Hellerman. "You can only comment in a timelined protest pen. It reaffirms my suspicion that the people on City Council don't really care about people who aren't white middle class property owners." Another member of PPC, Jason Marrero, called the restriction "a prompt to talk about everything else that is linked to the condo proposal as other elements in the general move toward gentrification."

Ideas worth hearing

Opposition to the rezone unites a wide swathe of the Olympia Community: From Nihilists Against Gentrification (NAG), who express themselves via vandalism and anonymous online statements; to the People for a Participatory City (see press statement, page 6); to the mostly retired yet tireless longtime community members who comprise the Friends of the Waterfront; to Olympia 20/20, a group that is calling for non-local professional planning intervention for downtown Olympia; to a newly forming group, called the "Steering Committee for Public Acquisition," led by former Planning Commissioners Jeff Jaksich and Jerry Reilly, which is exploring the feasibility of a public/private partnership that would enable public acquisition of most of the isthmus. Only NAG seems to take ironic pride in being negative—stating on Portland Indymedia that "NAG is every broken window, every shadow against your wall, every creak in your stairs, every ghost under your bed." The rest of these groups, people whom the Olympian dismisses as "naysayers," are actually generating positive ideas about the future of Olympia. These are ideas worth hearing. More communication, not less, is the answer to taking our city into a better future.

What do you think? What do you feel?

The council may not want to hear it, but we do! Next month, *Works In Progress* will be publishing 99 reasons to oppose the rezone of the isthmus (this number may be subject to expansion). What are your reasons? Please write to us at *olywip@gmail.com* or P.O. Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507

The 277 local residents who lined up first, filling the hearing room to capacity. Photo by Bert Whitlock.

Interview with Fred King, Capitol Campus Design Advisory Committee Chair

I understand that there were two presentations regarding the rezone proposal made by City of Olympia staff to the Capitol Campus Design Advisory Committee (CCDAC)?

The first time we were just told there was a rezone proposal, and CCDAC members said we don't know what the effect of this will be, give us some graphic illustrations of how this will affect views. The second time, the city staff came back with some building block type illustrations that purported to show how it would affect views from several locations on campus, although it wasn't entirely clear at which locations. At that meeting, CCDAC expressed some concerns. We still felt that we didn't have adequate evidence that the views on campus wouldn't be adversely affected, especially by the taller buildings.

From the beginning we have been opposed to any buildings in the fountain block. The reason for that is that during the several years when we were planning Heritage Park, there were discussions between the city and state about the overall park grouping, with Heritage Park on state land and the city park on city land, and there were agreements about how this would proceed, which included that block being entirely park.

Do you feel the presentations were objective, or biased in favor of the rezone?

I don't think they were particularly biased. I felt they were objective. But they weren't terribly clear.

I read in the Olympian that people seeing the presentation, with the graphics with large buildings on the isthmus, gasped in horror* [Ed. note: the *Olympian* article actually reads that members of the committee "groaned"]. *What was the reaction to the presentation?

I don't recall people gasping in horror, but it was certainly a negative reaction.

Who are the legislators on the Design Committee?

There are four legislators, two from each house, and each house has a representative from each caucus. Senator Karen Fraser, Representative Sam Hunt, Representative De Bolt, and Senator Dale Brandland. The Secretary of State is also on CCDAC. He attends periodically, but normally sends one of his deputies. Most frequently it has been Patrick McDonald. There are also four design professionals appointed by the governor.

Were any of the legislators particularly adamant, or vehement, in their opposition to the rezone proposal?

I don't feel that any one of the legislators present at the meetings was uniquely adamant. There was discomfort on the part of all of them. In fact, I don't recall that anyone on CCDAC expressed any support for the concept. But we did agree on a couple of things. One was until we have better visual presentations of the impact of the rezone, we shouldn't be making a hard statement. And we agreed strongly about preserving the fountain block as a park, as I already told you. I do want to emphasize that the members of the Committee do understand the City of Olympia's need and desire for better housing. We're not in opposition to housing downtown. We're in opposition to buildings that block the view to and from the campus.

We're not in opposition to housing downtown. We're in opposition to buildings that block the view to and from the campus.

Some people have said that building large buildings that block the view from the Capitol Campus would damage relationships between the state and the city, between legislators and city government. From your vantage point, do you see a danger of this happening?

I am speaking on behalf of the CCDAC, and in that, it would be inappropriate for any particular member of the committee to speculate on what the impact on relationships might be, and I certainly can't speak from a legislative perspective.

What I can say is that for literally decades, the campus planning for the capitol campus was made to a large extent in collaboration and cooperation with the City of Olympia. There were certain principles of the campus master plan that we felt the city fully endorsed. One was that these view corridors were to be protected from the campus to Budd Inlet, and beyond. We have developed even our most current master plan in such a way that view corridors were not blocked by new campus buildings. This had been up until now a cooperative understanding that the legislative building was the gem of the campus and, for that matter, the gem of the town, and that the ability to see it from many places in Olympia was very important to the character of the community.

Similarly, from the campus perspective, the view out across the Fourth Avenue isthmus to Budd Bay and the mountains beyond was very important to the character of the campus. The Police Associations of the state just completed a very significant monument on the campus and positioned it in a way to take advantage of the wonderful views across the isthmus and Budd Bay and across to the mountains. Lower buildings would not impair that view, but certainly several buildings of the size of the Capitol Center Building would do that.

The point is the views from campus, particularly from the Temple of Justice and some of the plazas that will be part of the new Heritage Center which is currently being designed at the location of the current GA building, will be impacted. The Heritage Center will have several plazas and each one of them has its own view to the north. It's a building that we expect will be visited every day by school children from all around the state, admiring the campus and learning about the history of the state and its development and seeing its position in the Olympia environment.

Some of Triway's representatives and boosters have said that the original Wilder & White plan did not presume that there would be no tall buildings on the isthmus, only that there would be a small "view corridor" in the fountain area. What do you believe the Campus designers had in mind for the isthmus?

I think that Triway's folks are incorrect. I believe that the views north and beyond were integral to the way the capitol campus was originally planned.

When you testified at the Planning Commission hearing on June 24, what you said about the "pedestrian character" of the isthmus particularly resonated with me, as I walk around Capital Lake frequently. How do you feel a rezone would change that character? What kind of character would evolve instead if there were tall buildings in that area?

It depends a lot on how those tall buildings develop, but it is reasonable to assume that if they have several hundred people living on the isthmus, there will be a lot more cars, the streets will be much more crowded, and it will be an urban experience rather than the pastoral experience that the park now presents.

At the June 24 Planning Commission hearing, a lot of people were upset about not being able to speak. I heard you arrived very early to sign in. Is that true?

No. I am representing a state agency. Another representative of the state agency came very early to sign me in. The representative of GA who came and signed me in was there early, and stood in line for quite a while.

Gentrification is only one way to develop a city

by People for a Participatory City (PPC)

The decisions that shape a city are too often the results of conversations between politicians and investors. There are few places for other kinds of people to put themselves into the process, and so no guarantees that the experience and analysis of other kinds of citizens will be heard and used when the would-be experts meet.

We want to see an Olympia shaped by a vision created by all the people that live or work in the city - not according to separated, unaccountable groups within it that have no connection to most of the excitement and variety of life in the city as it is now.

When policy decisions are made - away from where we might see or participate in them - they are made in the name of "the public." We look and we see gentrifiers framing current problems in a way that excludes certain people from *their idea* of "the public."

We call these excluded people the "talked-abouts." People who are talked about and spoken for, like "the homeless," "RV campers," "students," "panhandlers," "families," "vandals," most people in "local business," and "the public" itself. The talked-abouts don't hold public office, invest in real estate, or run big publications, and so don't get to publicly describe and defend their needs and their visions of a desirable Olympia. They just get to be talked about.

Here are some of our specific goals as a group:

- We want to prevent the isthmus rezone
- We want to prevent Triway's proposed developments
- We want to prevent the proposed noise ordinance
- We want to reverse the pedestrian interference ordinance
- We want to reverse the RV parking ordinance

These ordinances and proposals are part of a greater movement to transform downtown Olympia's character to the benefit of investors - not to the benefit of the citizens that live and work in downtown.

Development is vital to a city, but gentrification is only one way to develop. Whatever freedoms gentrification claims to offer can be made in other ways, without sacrificing the needs of any sector of the society in the name of any other sector's aesthetics.

We also identify these broader goals:

- To see more affordable and sustainable downtown housing
- To see more jobs downtown
- To create a permanent, accessible means for the public to guide or influence development in Olympia—inclusive of *all* people who live *anywhere* inside the city limits, as well as businesses and institutions that aren't excited about the Olympia Downtown Association's way of doing things
- To redefine city government's relationship to downtown business so that the ODA no longer gets special privileges.
- To create more public spaces (parks, museums, forests) and maintain those that already exist
- To see ecological design in any further development in Olympia
- New approaches to tending to emergencies—calling the police isn't always a good solution
- To see the city re-fund the Tenants Union, because it provides vital services to renters, who make up almost half of our city's population
- To see the Olympian consistently reporting a variety of perspectives
- Above all, to see *changes* that maintain Olympia's *'Olympia-ness'*

There are already several groups that have formed in opposition to Triway's condo proposal. People for a Participatory City's current project is to add its work and its voices to this opposition. We ask people who also connect the condo proposal to *gentrification* to join us in putting this connection out in the open and taking action.

Our long-term proposal in short: Let's develop systems for making public proposals in which anyone affected by a proposal can participate equally in making it. Instead of always reacting to professionally designed proposals to coerce people in the name of "development."

We are talking about the invention of a participatory city.

What do you want? We seek collaborators who want to answer this question. Even if you don't talk to us, talk to each other.

PPC meets each Monday from 7-9 PM at Bread and Roses Advocacy Center (1009 4th Ave). Our current contact email is *shoutdowncc@gmail.com*.

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Introducing 20/20 Vision Olympia

by 20/20 Vision Olympia

Our new Olympia grassroots group promotes full-scale, community-based, and non-local professional planning effort for downtown to begin in 2009.

20/20 Vision Olympia was originally born out of concern surrounding the proposed height rezone on the downtown isthmus.

Who is signing on to 20/20 Vision Olympia?

We are citizens who have entrusted city planners and decision-makers to care for Olympia, but who now believe that: (1) professional planning intervention for the downtown is essential; and (2) the proposed high-rise condominium development on the isthmus will degrade not only the historical aesthetic vision for our state capital, but also the present-day beauty and essence of our downtown.

What does 20/20 Vision Olympia hope to accomplish?

Olympia is blessed by its incomparable physical surroundings and its very caring and engaged citizenry. 20/20 is grateful for the myriad, Herculean planning efforts that have thus far shaped our downtown. However, before the isthmus question is resolved, we want our city council, ideally in partnership with our state government, to become even better advocates for our capital city by funding a planning, design, and implementation effort that would ensure that all of Olympia's disparate stakeholders (citizens groups, elected leaders, governing agencies, and investors) will have the opportunity--starting in 2009--to work together to make a concrete and specific blueprint for a downtown that: (1) supports our merchants and businesses; (2) offers an appropriate level of market rate housing in a sustainable and livable setting; (3) addresses public open spaces, including the waterfront and state capitol campus; and (4) promotes an ever-higher quality of life for all Olympians.

To engender the trust of all our city's disparate stakeholders, we believe the professional planning and design consultant/team should, for the sake of optimum fairness and neutrality, be based outside of Olympia. We further believe that their most critical aim must be to conceive a downtown whose physical legacy of beauty, timelessness, sustainability, and architectural integrity--and its uniquely creative spirit--inspire future citizens and care-takers of Olympia for several generations to come.

We look forward to a not-too-distant future when Olympia is widely acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful and economically vibrant cities in the Pacific Northwest--and one of the best places to live in the entire country.

www.2020visionolympia.org

Foreign invasion! Our coastline is porous! Stryker vehicles from Iraq land at the Port of Tacoma...Obama, help!

COMMUNITIES RALLY TO PREVENT MILITARIZATION OF PUBLIC PORT

by Port Militarization Resistance

On July 28, 2008, the USNS Brittin returned to the Port of Tacoma. This ship is transporting damaged equipment from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team 2nd Infantry for repair and further deployment.

Community members, anti-port militarization activists and others from the peace and justice community of Washington and Oregon will descend on the Tacoma Federal Courthouse, 1713 Pacific Avenue, everyday from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm to demand the withdrawal of the military from this port. These peaceful, family friendly vigils will continue everyday until the equipment is gone. Others intend to quarantine the equipment in the Port.

Demonstrators cite a variety of new and exciting tactics to be used in opposition of the military use of this public port.

"We hope to create safe space for all to voice their opposition to these crimes against peace and to resist the use of public lands to enable a bloody occupation," says Olympia Port Militarization Resistance member Patty Imani. Many demonstrators oppose the use of their community as a "revolving door" for military equipment that is being used to commit war crimes. Tacoma, the larger community, and the world asserts that this war violates international law as defined by the Nuremberg Charter and Principles.

In the past, similar peaceful Port Militarization Resistance demonstrations have been met with overwhelming police violence. Police have illegally used chemical weapons and "less than lethal weapons" on people whose only crime was to attempt to uphold international law.

In March of 2007, this equipment left the Port of Tacoma for Iraq.

Resisters sought to prevent the material from leaving, in hopes that this would prevent the deployment of troops. Through the use of enormous and unnecessary violence, police eventually cleared a path for this equipment to board the ship. There were 37 arrests. The equipment now returns on the heels of the soldiers, who returned home last month. 37 of these soldiers lost their lives in Iraq.

This press release was written by representatives from PMR. PMR is an action-based coalition of anti-war activists who refuse their community's complacency in illegal occupations by stopping the military use of their streets, people, resources, and public ports.

See related event on page 2.

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Activist Summer Project: I-69

by Billie Burlock

From anticipating port shipments to preventing the naked gentrification of our downtown, activists in Olympia have a lot on their plates right now. An important project, however, is drawing a number of Olympia activists away from home during the summer months.

I-69 is an existing route that, if fully expanded, will stretch 2000 miles from Canada to the Atlantic Corridor Highway of the Plan Pueblo Panama in Mexico, completing the ominous pan-American NAFTA superhighway: a vital piece of the free trade infrastructure that would further exploit workers and land for the primary benefit of those who control it.

Despite 18 years of fierce public opposition, Gohmann Asphalt and Construction has begun removing trees on the lots of the six evicted houses within the first 1.77 miles of the proposed route. Activists are flocking to southern Indiana, where construction is slated to start sometime this summer. There is extensive organizing across political lines, particularly in Evansville, as part of the resistance to the $4 billion expansion of I-69 in Indiana. Strong resistance projects have so far included marches, banner drops, tree-sits, squats, and guerilla gardens.

There has been significant police repression lately. Phones are being cut off and tapped, police are following and taping activists at every turn, and nine people are being charged in relation to a tree-sit and action that were broken up in the past two weeks, but determination is only strengthening as the summer progresses.

The I-69 project managers are still intent on proceeding with construction, despite a serious lack of public support. Who would want it, knowing that in Indiana alone, the project is slated to displace 450 families, destroy 5,000 acres of farmland, 1,600 acres of forest, and 300 acres of wetlands?

Those in Evansville emphasize that there is plenty of housing for activists who want to come to Indiana to plug in. For more information, check out *StopI69.wordpress.com* or email *RoadblockEF@yahoo.com*.

Bernie Meyer, American Gandhi

by Daisy Ouye

"I couldn't have planned this" Bernie laughed. In fact, it wasn't even his idea. This hometown hero gone global had to be coaxed into his first portrayal of the Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi. He reveals a wonderfully rich life of contemplation and courage, as he tells his story in his new book *The American Gandhi: My Truth Seeking With Humanity At the Crossroads*.

His approachable nature left him open to Chris Dull's unusual request. Both are members of the National Council of Fellowship of Reconciliation. Two directors on the council were doing work relating to Gandhi's teachings. Bernie's portrayal would be a gift to them, and consequently, the world.

His strikingly similar looks and historically accurate portrayal were warmly received. He was encouraged and enlisted to continue, speaking for colleges, schools, Indian cultural groups, libraries, peace gatherings, and listed with Humanities Washington.

It was after Bernie accepted an invitation to do his portrayal in India that he was approvingly adorned with a new name, a sandalwood garland around his neck, and a weighty responsibility. Now dubbed "The American Gandhi" he was told in the name of the Association of World Citizens, "It is your calling to take Gandhi to the world."

Bernie Meyer's sense of duty began early on in his 70 years. He achieved his boyhood call to be ordained as a Catholic priest in Cleveland, Ohio. Bernie states in his new book that his participation in the Urban Ministry Program "provided the posture that formed my entire life from that point on." It was there that he learned you must go to the roots of injustices affecting people. He has lived his life honoring that principle. He may not be the "Mahatma" but he is truly a "Great Soul."

In 2006 the American Gandhi led a Salt Walk in Olympia in reflection of Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 held in India. Bernie called on "Truth Seekers" to join him. He believes that the Truth is in all of us, and that Love is being faithful to the Truth, to all that is. He spoke about major issues calling for modern Gandhian solutions.

The 1930 Salt March was a coordinated act of civil disobedience to repressive British law. The result was called the first true act of "peaceful militancy", and a Round Table Conference in London took place to discuss law reform. The talks were "inconclusive" but the achievement, historic. The American Gandhi's 2006 Salt Walk would challenge worldwide repression on a grassroots level.

Doctor Vishwanath D. Karad, president of the World Peace Centre in Pune, India instructs that with humanity at the crossroads the answers that will bring harmony lie in science and spirituality alone. During the first week of August, Bernie Meyer, the American Gandhi, will be among other scholars, philosophers, scientists and Nobel Laureates speaking at a modern day Round Table Conference in Pune at the request of Dr. Karad. The speeches given at this prestigious event will be compiled into a publication that will be submitted to world leaders in science, spirituality and politics.

> Now dubbed "The American Gandhi" he was told in the name of the Association of World Citizens, "it is your calling to take Gandhi to the world."

The American Gandhi will describe a "triple threat" to human existence as: global climate change, nuclear weaponry and industrial society's dependence upon the depleting resources of liquid fossil fuel and water.

He will further explain that though we must study so we can act now, "humanity can use its wisdom to apply science to overcome this."

The insights shared in his book are a culmination of in-depth study into the roots of human violence, and over four decades of activism, making a clear case for nonviolence. He weaves his own experiences and poetry with various scriptural text and quotes and ideas of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Alice Walker, Arundahti Roy, and other influences.

The American Gandhi: My Truth Seeking With Humanity at the Crossroads by Bernie Meyer, is available at Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble online. He will make local appearances soon after his return from India and his book should be available soon in local bookstores.

Dedicated to All Peacemakers as Truth Seekers, the Introduction reads: For all those who intentionally dedicate their lives for justice, I present another reason for hope.

Daisy Ouye is a frequent contributor to Works In Progress

Bernie "Gandhi" Meyer and community members recreate the salt march on Capitol Way in 2006. Photo by Scott Yoos.

Exciting work continues on the Olympia–Rafah Mural Project

by Ashley Harrison

On the north side of the Labor Temple building at State and Capitol, we will affirm the sister-city connection between Olympia, Washington and Rafah, Palestine. The mural will examine Olympia's "hidden histories" and explore links between our local past and global struggles for social economic justice. Labor history, the dispossession of Native Americans from their land, and current immigration and deportation struggles link us to events which have shaped the history of Rafah. Through art, we seek to understand our own past and present participation in colonialism and occupation.

Four "R's" frame our design and image selection: relationships, return, resistance, and reconciliation. We celebrate and seek to strengthen the human connections between our communities, affirm the right of return for the Palestinian diaspora, acknowledge the daily acts of resistance to oppression, and express our heartfelt hope for reconciliation.

Central to our mural design is a large olive tree featuring tile leaves painted by local individuals to reflect their visions of peace and justice. Several hundred tiles have been painted and fired, with further workshops and open studios planned to work with artists, students, and organizations on mural design. Two artists from the Rafah Artists' Association are helping to design scenes from Palestine and hope to join us during the painting. Between the branches, we are asking local groups to paint their social justice visions onto canvas fabric, which will be applied to the wall along with the tile leaves.

Proposed by muralist Susan Greene, this project follows up on two murals painted in Rafah by Susan and other members of the Break the Silence Mural and Arts Project. Susan has been involved in a number of community murals in San Francisco, and she recently returned from working on mural projects in Bi'lin and at the Edward Said Conservatory of Music in Ramallah. She plans to return to Rafah to work with the community there on a "sister mural" thematically linked to the Olympia-Rafah Mural.

The Mural Project seeks volunteers to help us achieve the mural vision of community building and collaborative art in pursuit of social justice. Please consider joining our work, or making a donation to the mural. Activists, artists, community members, children, local organizations—all are welcome!

Ways to Get Involved:

- Contribute ideas for images
- Paint a tile leaf
- Join a committee—design, outreach, fundraising, public relations, education, mural production, documentation, tile coordination, website, developing Rafah connections, and planning a celebration event
- Schedule a time to bring members from your organization to the Design Studio for leaf painting and design work
- Become a co-sponsoring individual or organization
- Donate money, donate scaffolding, paint, other supplies, or donate miles for plane tickets
- Work with youth groups and classes to educate and inspire images and connection to the project
- Plan a fundraising project related to the mural art project
- Provide ideas for a counterpart mural in Rafah
- Do short outreach presentations—talks, tabling, etc—to local service organizations, churches, etc.
- Host out of town guests—speakers, Break the Silence mural artist partners, delegation from Rafah
- Host potlucks and other social gatherings for out-of-towners, local committee members, artists
- Provide airport transportation

Contribute specific skills or assistance through:

- Videotaping and photography
- Writing a press release and planning for publicity
- Assisting with the website for mural progress/plans
- Transporting mural tiles and supplies
- Providing or donating meeting space for the ORMP Core Committee
- Being on-site during the painting to assist our Volunteer Coordinator in instructing volunteers and overseeing the mural site

Clay tiles painted by community members. They will be installed on the wall as the leaves of the olive tree. Photo by Ashley Harrison.

- Cooking or donating food and snacks for the on-site volunteers

Contact us at *mural@rachelcorriefoundation.org* to get involved! Look to *www.olympiarafahmural.org* soon for volunteer opportunities, open studio times, design images, needs for in-kind donations, and much more.

See you at the wall!

Ashley Harrison is the Public Relations Coordinator for the Olympia–Rafah Mural Project. Sometimes she does other things.

The Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee seeks funds to sponsor Iraqi student at Evergreen

by Andrew Robbins, Hudson Muñoz, and Ashley Harrison

Over 4.4 million Iraqis have been displaced by the occupation of Iraq by the United States military. Those who leave Iraq are forced to rearrange their lives with little support and resources; the lives of those who stay are broken by violence, diminished access to natural resources, and a debilitated community. While the United States government works to extend its reach in Iraq, a group of students and community members in Olympia, Washington have responded to the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.

In October, an Iraqi woman came to The Evergreen State College to speak about her experiences in Jordan supporting other displaced Iraqis. She pointed out that Evergreen students and event attendees could sit, listen to her speak, feel sorrow about the situation, and then go home at the end of the day, all while her country burned and her community remained imperiled. In response to her testimony of the dire situation both inside and outside of Iraq, The Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee (ISSC) formed with the intent of offering Iraqi students a free Evergreen education. The ISSC connected with the Iraqi Student Project (ISP), a group based in Damascus trying to place Iraqi students in colleges in the United States.

The ISP had success at several schools within the United States. Spaces were opened for students from Iraq to attend college free of charge. Most the schools were private, and in each case school administrators were approached directly by the ISP. At that time The Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee was the first group to work with the Iraqi Student Project that was organized by students, faculty and community members, rather than administrators.

The ISSC began a petition to demonstrate grassroots support for the project. The group conducted extensive research on administrative processes, legal avenues, and the allocation of tuition waivers while building a coalition of community support on and off-campus. The ISSC met with college administrators at every level to present their case for the creation of tuition waivers for displaced Iraqi students and build administrative support for the project.

> The ISSC is not just a response to the war. It is a response to the catastrophic failure of the United States to take responsibility for the refugee crisis.

When the Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee made a formal presentation to the Vice Presidents of the college, one-quarter of the student population had signed the petition in support, the faculty had voted in support of the project, and student and community groups had pledged their open-ended support. However, the administration cited many barriers to the project and refused to fund a single tuition waiver.

The ISSC did not back down. The students believed it was the responsibility of state schools to step up and offer free education to students living in a country that cannot provide for its citizens because of the actions of the United States military. Eventually the group persuaded the President of The Evergreen State College to create a workgroup of deans and vice presidents, to find a way to implement the goals of the ISSC at the college. This collaboration of administrators and students created a tuition-waiver program that will be available to students whose lives have been disrupted by military conflict and will cover a full, four-year college education. The first award will go to an Iraqi student beginning in Fall, 2008.

The ISSC is not just a response to the war. It is a response to the catastrophic failure of the United States to take responsibility for the refugee crisis. The group has partnered with The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice, an Olympia based non-profit. The Rachel Corrie Foundation is an organization with a similar dedication to providing access to education for students whose home countries have been severely disrupted.

The ISSC is currently working on funding the living expenses of the student arriving in the fall, obtaining financial support for future students, and expanding the project to other schools in the Pacific Northwest. The committee seeks systemic change, and offers a concrete path to justice.

The ISSC needs your help to support the student coming in the fall. Financial resources are needed, as well as in-kind donations such as a cell phone plan, airline miles/airfare, etc. To make a tax-deductible donation to the ISSC you can visit their website at *www.olympia-issc.org* or e-mail them at *issc.evergreen@gmail.com*. The ISSC is always on the lookout for other student, faculty, or administrative groups at other state and private schools who want support in starting similar programs at their schools.

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HARD TIMES IN OLY

by Janet Blanding

Hard times are upon us. Gas and food prices are skyrocketing. The consumer price index in June 2008 was 5.6% higher than in June 2007. Retail sales are down, foreclosures are up, rents are on the rise, and some of Olympia's largest employers have laid off employees or cut back on hours. More layoffs are mostly like in the works. People are finding it difficult to make ends meet, to find affordable housing, to keep the gas tank filled and the refrigerator stocked. The middle class is being impacted, and the poor, as usual, are being hit even harder.

Robert Coit, Executive Director, Thurston County Food Bank reports that there has been a 20% increase in the number of people the food bank is serving versus last year. In June 2008, the food bank fed 6000 individuals, in addition to providing 1000 backpack meals to school children. Coit reports that although they are currently meeting demand, "My fear is we won't be able to meet demands in the winter months," when there is more demand for food as family budgets are strained by increased heating costs. He explained that a lot of the food bank's funding support comes from foundations. When a foundation's stock portfolio is impacted by an economic downturn and dividends decrease, so does the amount of funds received by the food bank – just at the time more families need food assistance. Coit explains that the Food Bank is subject to a Catch-22: "When we ask for help in good times, they ask 'where are your numbers?' When we have the numbers, they don't have as much money to give us."

Selena Kilmoyer, of Out of the Woods Family Shelter, reports that the rising costs of gas and food are having a significant impact on the population her organization serves. "Among have-nots, it's having a very detrimental impact." Rising gas prices are creating difficulties for working families. "A family will call and say, we could come up to Olympia to the food bank, but we don't have money for gas. These kinds of things are being heard more and more." People on tight budgets are forced to sacrifice basic necessities: "If gas is increased, then something else has to be cut out from a very tight budget. The choices have always been there, and now the choices are even more drastic."

Monica Peabody, of Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights (POWER) reports that although Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was recently increased, the cost of living is rising even more. "Welfare recipients got their first increase this year in 15 years, and it was a 3% increase, which translates into 12 or 15 dollars more per month. We're happy for the 3% increase, but it's not nearly enough." Another problem is that food stamps have not kept up with inflation, which creates difficulty for the families she works with. "With the price of food going up, they have less and less to eat."

Affordable housing is another challenge. TANF for a mother and one child now is $453 a month. "It's incredibly difficult to find housing on that," says Peabody. The Thurston County Housing Authority, which provides rental assistance for low income individuals and families, has a five year waiting list, which is now closed. "You can't even get on the five-year waiting list right now," says Peabody. When asked what happens to these women and their children, Peabody replies "They're homeless a lot, or they live in substandard housing, and they're the ones talking to the Tenants Union."

TANF for a mother and one child now is $453 a month. "It's incredibly difficult to find housing on that," says Peabody.

Pat Tassoni of the Tenants Union reports that he is seeing more tenants in distress. "They're freaked out," he says. "People come into my office in desperate circumstances, and they ask what the legislature is doing to fix this." Unfortunately, says Tassoni, the legislature is working to delay foreclosures, not evictions. "Renters are not a priority," he says. He tells the story of one woman he tried to help recently: "She lived 25 miles from work in a rural area. She had to pay over $200 a month for gas, and couldn't make the rent." When landlords evict tenants for nonpayment of rent, there is really nothing the Tenants Union can do to help them. "She looked at me and said 'So, I guess this is where I become homeless…"

The Tenants Union's contract with the city of Olympia runs out at the end of August. As Tassoni describes it, "This money has provided the backbone for the work the Tenants Union does." Other, smaller funding sources will allow the Tenants Union to remain open throughout 2008, but, "Unless the county or city comes through with some funding, the Tenants Union will close its doors by the end of the year, and tenants will have nowhere to go."

As services to the poor, already overstrained, are cut back, the population in need of assistance is certain to grow. Several large employers in Olympia have laid off employees or cut back hours as the economy worsens. Batdorf & Bronson Coffee Roasters recently announced a restructuring; although their retail outlets will continue on the same schedule, the roastery is now only open four days a week. Roastery employees, instead of working five eight-hour days will work four nine-hour days instead, resulting in approximately 20 fewer paid hours a month, and a significant loss of income, just at a time when it's getting harder to make ends meet.

Another large employer, *The Olympian*, has also laid off 17 employees, including business reporter Jim Syzmanski, features reporter Lisa Pemberton and online reporter April Chan. The *O*'s parent company, McClatchy, recently posted a 44% reduction in second-quarter earnings. At the *Tacoma News Tribune*, some reporters have been replaced with interns who work for free. An insider remarked that McClatchy's financial woes have had a chilling effect on news reportage; reporters are more willing to toe the line and write exactly what their editors want to hear, for fear of losing their jobs. The most recently hired staffers, such as reporter Matt Batcheldor, who covers the Olympia City Council, will be the first to be fired if future layoffs occur.

A number of local businesses have closed recently, resulting in further job loss: Cielo Bleu, Otto's, Black Front Gallery, the Ribeye, Whirligig, the Fabric and Clothing Gallery, and others. Although a lot of people attribute these business closures to the absence of luxury condos on Olympia's isthmus (if only the millionaires had arrived in time to save the Ribeye!), others think it may have something to do with the economy.

Rumors have been circulating that layoffs are imminent at the city of Olympia. On July 23, Communications Manager Cathie Butler said the city had no plans to cut jobs before the end of 2008, although she admitted that, "Like anyone else, businesses and governments and individuals, the economy is affecting us." Reduced revenue in sales tax and construction permits have placed a strain on the city's budget. Butler reported that in July, sales tax receipts were down 12% from what had been budgeted based on prior years. "Our total general fund budget is 59 million dollars," reported Butler. "Sales tax revenue is 30% of that." To manage this shortfall, the city has put a freeze on new hiring, except for "police, fire and maintenance staff, and that is only with City Manager Steve Hall's approval." Butler reported that the city is enacting a number of other cost-cutting measures that don't involve job loss. The city is evaluating the budget on a month-to-month basis, so layoffs cannot be absolutely ruled out, however Butler emphasized that, "for 2008, layoffs would be a last resort."

An increasingly familiar sight in Olympia these days is a crowd of people waiting at a bus stop. Buses to and from Tacoma are frequently at full capacity, especially during afternoon commutes, which are often standing-room-only. As gas prices have increased to new heights, more people are taking the bus. According to Meg Kester, Marketing and Communications Manager of Intercity Transit, ridership for June 2008 was up 22% over June 2007. "That's on top of having extremely healthy ridership in 2007 over 2006, and 2006 over 2005. To see a 22% increase on top of a very healthy growth period for transit is very indicative of the community and the climate today." Kester reports that there are currently no plans to expand bus routes or increase service. "There certainly is a need," she said. "But we've put as much service as we can on the street over the last three to four years, and can't do anything further without additional revenue." Kester reports that the transit authority is exploring funding options that may be available, "But we're in a recessionary period and funding is limited." Kester remarked that some transit districts around the country have been forced to cut back service because of high fuel costs; Intercity Transit, however, will be able to sustain the present level of service for the foreseeable future.

The Farmer's Market seems to be thriving, but produce prices are noticeably higher. Farmer Jim McGinn of Rising River Farm, explains that although he has to commute 40 miles to get to the market, it's not just the rising cost of fuel that is forcing him to charge more for produce. "It's the cost of living for my workers," he says, adding that, "People doing this kind of work are not living high on the hog." Demand for fresh, local produce is high, yet because federal farm policy favors agribusiness at the expense of small farmers, it is difficult for the latter to stay afloat. Even when a bunch of organic radishes is three dollars and cherries are five dollars a pound, small farmers are struggling financially. McGinn

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If only everyone were this happy about getting on the bus. Photo by Intercity Transit.

WHICH WAR YOU GONNA VOTE FOR?

Reality check: The Democrats are the real problem

by Mike Whitney

Obama's candidacy is over; kaput. He's already stated that he has no intention of stopping the war, so he has disqualified himself. That's his prerogative; no one put a gun to his head. His op-ed in July 14's *New York Times* just removes any lingering doubt about the matter. What Obama proposes is moving the central theater of operation from Iraq to Afghanistan. Big deal. Why is it more acceptable to kill a man who is fighting for his country in Afghanistan than in Iraq?

It's not—which is why Obama must be defeated and the equivocating Democratic Party must be jettisoned altogether. The Democrats are a party of blood just like the Republicans, they're just more discreet about it. That's why people who are serious about ending the war have to support candidates outside the two-party charade. The Democrat/Republican duopoly will not deliver the goods; it's as simple as that. The point is to stop the killing, not to provide blind support for smooth-talking politicos who try to mask their real intentions. Obama made his choice, now he can suffer the consequences.

Nancy Pelosi is a perfect example of what the Democrats are all about. Just look at the way she brushed aside the people who got her elected. They mean nothing to her. In a matter of months, the "San Francisco liberal" has achieved what former-Speaker of the House Hastert could only dream of: she's driven the Congress' public approval ratings into single digits for the first time in history making her the worst speaker of all time. She rubber-stamped the FISA bill, concealed what she knew about the CIA's global torture programs, and vowed to stop any public effort to hold the administration accountable for its war crimes. (No impeachment) She has betrayed her most ardent supporters and singlehandedly transformed an already-emasculated congress into a purely ceremonial body incapable of doing the people's work.

At least Bush never betrayed any of his supporters. Never. Pelosi is worse than Bush, much worse.

And yet, liberals still insist that we should vote the Democratic ticket. In your dreams!

What leftist or progressive is not totally fed-up with the Democrats' cagey "bait-and-switch" hypocrisy? Voting the Democratic ticket is not a sign of "hope"; it's a sign of being a schmuck. The Democrats have done nothing to stop the war and will do nothing to stop the war. The Obama candidacy is merely a way to replace one group of genocidal maniacs with another. Who needs a charismatic, flannel-mouth glamor boy to lead us into battle when a senile fogy with "anger management" issues will do just fine.

Voters of conscience should reject that choice altogether. Just as they should reject the "lesser of two evils" theory which does not apply when ordinance is being dumped daily on innocent civilians. It has to stop.

Obama is not an antiwar candidate, that is merely a fiction maintained by his public relations team. In fact, he wants to beef up the military with 65,000 additional ground forces and 27,000 more marines. He's also stated that he will add "two additional combat brigades to Afghanistan" and encourage NATO to make "greater contributions—with fewer restrictions." In his op-ed he boasted, "As president, I will make the fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban the top priority that it should be. This is a war that we have to win."

He also added this ominous warning:

The greatest threat to that security lies in the tribal regions of Pakistan, where terrorists train and insurgents strike into Afghanistan. We cannot tolerate a terrorist sanctuary, and as president, I won't. We need a stronger and sustained partnership between Afghanistan, Pakistan and NATO to secure the border, to take out terrorist camps and to crack down on cross-border insurgents. We need more troops, more helicopters, more satellites, more Predator drones in the Afghan border region. And we must make it clear that if Pakistan cannot or will not act, we will take out high-level terrorist targets like bin Laden if we have them in our sights.

Obama supporters should take their candidate at his word. What he is proposing is a dramatic escalation and expansion of the war into another sovereign country. How is this consistent with the demands of his base or the millions of Americans who believe that Obama represents real change?

It's time for a reality check; the Democrats are the real problem not the Republicans. If the path to peace requires crushing the Democratic Party and its blood-thirsty candidates, so be it. The main thing is to stop the killing. If Obama won't do it, we'll find someone who will.

Mike Whitney lives in Washington state and can be reached at fergiewhitney@msn.com

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says that in talking to other farmers and produce distributors, he has come to believe that scarcity of the type of food sold at the market is part of what's driving prices up, and may be even more of a problem in the future. Low supply and high demand drive up prices. At the time we spoke, early afternoon on a Sunday in July, the Farmer's Market was teeming with shoppers, and although people complained a little about prices, they continued to buy.

McGinn is sympathetic to the plight of people without a lot of money, and tries to make his produce available to them through offering Community Sustained Agriculture (CSA), as well as accepting WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children). McGinn wants to provide produce that is affordable for everyone. "The answer," he says, "is to stop development on farm land." He points to the example of Kent Valley, which was once farmland and is now all industrial. Kent Valley, he says, "has the best topsoil in the world," but very few farms remain.

*Jane** is 82 years old and retired. She has some savings, but reports that coping with the rising cost of living, "is a struggle, because I don't get much Social Security. And my medical costs are extraordinary, even with Medicare." Jane's medical costs, including medications and long term care insurance, consume half of her income. In addition, she reports, "Rent is high, and getting higher." Jane is driving less and consolidating errands. "I don't drive the car unless I have a lot of things I have to do." Jane says she is worried about the future; "I don't know how long the money is going to last if I live a long time."

Donna, 49, a married homeowner with two children, says "The rising cost of living hasn't hit us really hard, but I can see it looming." Like Jane, she is trying to drive less, planning errands accordingly. "My husband already takes the bus to work each day, and we're encouraging our daughters to take the bus more often." She also reports postponing buying big ticket items for the foreseeable future. "It's affected us," she says, "but we aren't eating less or anything like that." Donna's family's financial circumstances are still allow her to shop at the Farmer's Market, although she remarks, " I used to feel like I was spending a comparable amount at the Farmer's Market plus getting a better product, but now I'm paying more to shop there."

> "We need a New Deal!" said one person who was interviewed for this article. "Where's FDR when you need him?"

Sharon, 28, who is a single mother, says that the most difficult financial problem she is experiencing at this time is finding housing. She works cleaning houses, and is worried that people will cut out luxuries such as housecleaning as times get harder. "It's so hard to cope with the rising cost of living," she says. "I'm trying to take on more clients, but I'm having difficulty finding childcare." Although she is employed part time, she is eligible for food stamps, which she says make a huge difference. "If I didn't have food stamps," said Sharon, "we wouldn't be making it. Period."

Gary, 35, smiles wryly when asked how he is coping. "I'm living on credit, and looking for a better job," he says.

Richard, 55, a designer for a cabinet company, has the option of working extra hours, so he is choosing to do that rather than cutting back on expenses.

Cindy, 45, a single mother who has what she describes as "a pretty good job," in a service industry, has begun riding her bicycle as often as possible, rather than driving. Unlike previous summers, she and her son have no vacation plans this year. Her stimulus check went to pay for ordinary living expenses. "I'm getting by right now," she says, "but I'm really worried about how I'll cope this fall when I have to pay for heating costs. And I'm not looking forward to riding my bike in the rain."

Lauren, 39, works in the grocery business. "I'm trying to be conscientious about driving. I'm looking for ways to trim unnecessary expenses. I'm trying to think of ways to cook, like soups and stuff, that I can stretch farther." She is apprehensive about the future. "Financially, I feel like I'm in a situation where I'm spiraling down and I don't know how to get out of it," she says.

Morgan, 26, is faring better. "I'm not feeling the pinch," she said. A barista, she shares a Westside house with several housemates who have been working on creating a sustainable home for several years. She commutes to work via bicycle, and grows a lot of her own food. She and her housemates have installed solar panels, and are planning to build a second greenhouse. These lifestyle choices have made them more recession-proof, and she expressed fewer worries about the future than most people seem to.

It would be nice to conclude that living sustainably is the answer. Certainly, adopting more sustainable practices can be economical and enjoyable as well; just ask any low income family who has a GRuB garden ("GRuB" is Garden-Raised Bounty, an Olympia nonprofit organization). Still, shifting to sustainable practices is something that takes time, resources, and guidance. Many people have grown cynical about how public resources will be allocated, and feel that the economic hardships of the poor and middle class are of little interest to the powers that be. "We need a New Deal!" said one person who was interviewed for this article. "Where's FDR when you need him?

**Names in italics have been changed*

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